United Nations A/C.5/53/SR.44

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
21 December 1998

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 44th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 December 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Abelian ..... (Armenia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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98-83739 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 113: Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999 (*continued*)

Revised estimates for the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (A/C.5/53/47)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Budget Division) introduced the revised estimates for the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (A/C.5/53/47), which were submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to a decision by the Security Council, conveyed to him in a letter dated 11 December 1998, agreeing with his proposal to extend the mandate of the Office until December 1999. The sum of $1,543,600 gross ($1,395,300 net) was requested to provide for the Office, which would have five international staff and four support staff.

2. The Office had been established after the Secretary-General had received a letter dated 15 June 1998 from the President of the Security Council. Related provisions for 1998 were being reviewed in the context of the first performance report. The commitment entered into for 1998 had been made under the provisions for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses by drawing on the Working Capital Fund.

3. The request related solely to the calendar year 1999. Detailed provisions with regard to its components were shown in the annex to the document.

4. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville had been established on 1 July 1998 with the agreement of the Security Council. Paragraph 4 of the report of the Secretary-General gave details of the resources allocated for 1998. The Security Council had agreed to an extension of the Office's mandate until 31 December 1999 and the Secretary-General had estimated the related cost at $1,395,300 for nine temporary posts and the operational activities connected with the Office. The Advisory Committee agreed with the request of the Secretary-General as set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 and with the procedures set out in paragraph 10 of his report.

5. **The Chairman** suggested that the Fifth Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of the report of the estimate of $1,395,300 under section 3, Peacekeeping operations and special missions, of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, and $148,300 under section 32, Staff assessment, on the understanding that such additional appropriations as might be necessary would be dealt with outside the procedures related to the contingency fund, as provided for in annex I, paragraph 11, of General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986.

6. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 118: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.21

7. **Mr. Smyth** (Ireland) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.21 submitted by the Chairman following informal consultations. He urged its adoption by consensus.

8. *Draft resolution A/C.5/53/L.21 was adopted.*

9. **Mr. Bond** (United States of America), speaking in explanation of position, said that his delegation was seriously concerned that, once again, the Committee had failed to acknowledge the existence of any scale of assessments dealing with peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping assessments comprised an integral part of Articles 17 and 19 of the Charter, two Articles which were referred to liberally in the draft resolution as fundamental to the continued viability of the Organization. After some 25 years, peacekeeping assessments continued to be rendered on an ad hoc basis. There was still no movement to establish a permanent or formal scale for such assessments, even though they comprised a substantial part of contributions and the majority of the arrears of Member States.

10. It was incumbent on the Committee on Contributions to begin to examine those issues. His delegation remained perplexed that the draft resolution not only failed to acknowledge the principal role of that Committee but also sidestepped the entire issue of assessments relating to peacekeeping operations.

11. The issue of the scale of assessments would be considered again at the resumed fifty-third session when the question of exemptions for several Member States under Article 19 of the Charter would be reviewed. He urged members of the Committee to reflect further on the issue of peacekeeping assessments and the constructive technical role that should be played by the Committee on Contributions.

12. **Mr. Herrerra** (Mexico) said that the draft resolution reflected a delicate balance which incorporated all the elements of the question.

13. **Mr. Armitage** (Australia) said that, although his delegation had joined the consensus, it had been disappointed that the draft resolution adopted was procedural

in nature. The Committee had missed an opportunity to provide feedback to the Committee on Contributions regarding the application of Article 19 of the Charter. His delegation attached importance to the request that the Committee on Contributions should look into other measures to encourage the timely, full and unconditional payment of assessed contributions. Various proposals had been discussed over the years from a political standpoint, and there would be some value in requesting the technical opinion of the Committee on Contributions on the matter.

14. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while he recognized that the issue of the scale of assessments was a complex and sensitive one, he was surprised that the Committee had spent so many hours discussing it when 1998 was not a scale year.

15. Although the Group of 77 and China had joined the consensus on the draft resolution, it was not without great disappointment. It was very concerned with the spirit in which the draft resolution had been negotiated and strongly believed that mistrust and doubt should be avoided. It held to the longstanding view that it was irrelevant to link discussion on that agenda item with the special scale for peacekeeping budgets. It was also of the view that the Committee on Contributions did not have a mandate to discuss the special scale for peacekeeping budgets, as stated in paragraph 93 of the report of the Committee on Contributions (A/53/11). The Group of 77 and China would continue to be guided by the Ministerial Declaration of the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

16. **Mr. Watanabe** (Japan) said his delegation was pleased that the General Assembly was being requested to take note of the new role of the Committee on Contributions.

17. **Mr. Zhang Wanhai** (China) said that, in the past, the Organization had not acted in accordance with rule 160 of the rules of procedure and the views of the Committee on Contributions and an unjust approach had been taken towards the scale of assessments. His delegation hoped that exemptions under Article 19 of the Charter could be dealt with appropriately in the future.

18. **Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on the understanding that section D, paragraph 2, included the Observer delegation of Palestine.

19. **Mrs. Aragon** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The draft resolution just adopted represented a balance of the interests of all delegations. In section A, ASEAN was pleased to note the reaffirmation of the legal obligation of Member States to bear the expenses of the United Nations as apportioned by the General Assembly. It urged all Member States, in particular the major contributor, to pay their assessed dues in full, on time and without conditions.

20. ASEAN looked forward to the results of the review of the Committee on Contributions on the elements of the scale methodology, the application of Article 19 of the Charter and measures that would encourage the timely, full and unconditional payment of assessed contributions.

21. With regard to requests under exemption from Article 19, ASEAN joined in the reaffirmation of the role of the General Assembly, as well as the advisory role of the Committee on Contributions. The General Assembly should be able to benefit from the technical advice of that Committee when considering those requests, and ASEAN looked forward to its recommendations on the modalities for dealing with such requests when the Committee on Contributions was not in session.

22. With regard to the scale of assessments for peacekeeping, ASEAN supported the position of the Group of 77 and China that the principles and guidelines in resolutions 1874 (S-IV) and 3101 (XXVIII) should be institutionalized and adopted on a permanent basis. It further supported the position of that Movement of Non-Aligned Countries that no member of that Movement or other developing country should be classified in a category higher than group C.

23. **Mr. Bay** (Singapore) said that the scale of assessments was a politically sensitive issue. It had never been perfect and equitable and had never been meant to be so. His delegation agreed that peacekeeping scales of assessments should not be discussed under the current agenda item.

24. **Mr. Greiver** (Uruguay) requested the Committee to take due note of the statements made on behalf of the member countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) at the beginning of the current session.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.